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## GOD IN HIS ETERNAL IDEA.

TRANSLATED FROM THE THIRD PART OF HEGEL'S "PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION" BY  
F. LOUIS SOLDAN.

If God is thus contemplated in the element of thought, he is, so to say, before or outside of the creation of the world. Inasmuch as he is so in himself, he is the eternal idea which is not yet posited in its reality, and is, therefore, as yet, the abstract idea.

God in his eternal idea is in this form still in the abstract element of thinking, not in that of comprehension. This pure idea is what we have already become acquainted with in the preceding sections. It is the element of thought, the idea in its eternal Present as it is for free thought which has the fundamental determination of being unobscured light, of being identity with itself; it is an element which has not yet the attribute of alienation or otherness in it.

In this element there is:

1. A determination necessary, since thinking in general is different from thinking which comprehends [things as a whole]. The eternal idea, in and for itself in thought, is idea in its absolute truth. Religion has, therefore, a content, and the content is object; religion is the religion of man, and man, among other things, is thinking consciousness. The idea must consequently exist for thinking consciousness; man, however, is not merely this; in thinking alone he becomes truly man, for thinking alone the universal object exists, for it alone exists the essence of the object, and since in religion God is the object, he is essentially the object for thought. He is an object inasmuch as the spirit is consciousness, and he is for thinking, because it is God who is the object.

God cannot exist as God for the sensuous, reflecting consciousness—that is to say, not according to his eternally in and for itself existing essence; his phenomenality is something different; it exists for sensuous consciousness. If God existed in sensation only, man would not rank higher than the animal; he certainly exists for feeling also, but only in his phenomenality. Neither does he exist for the ratiocinative consciousness; reflection is, in-

deed, thinking, but it is also contingency for which the content may be ever so arbitrary, or limited. God may be such a content, or may not. Essentially he is for thought. This must be said when we start from the subjective, from man. But we reach the same conclusion if we begin with God. Spirit exists only as revealing itself, as distinguishing itself for the spirit for which it exists; this is the eternal idea, the thinking spirit, or spirit in the element of its freedom.

In this, God is self-revelation, because he is spirit; but he exists not yet as a phenomenon. It is, therefore, essential that God exists for the spirit.

Spirit [as object] is the [same as the] thinking spirit. In this pure thinking the relation is immediate, and there is no difference which could separate them; there is nothing between them; thinking is the pure unity with itself, where all that is dark, all that is obscure, disappears. (See note on p. 136.) This kind of thinking might be called pure intuition since it is the simple activity of thinking, in which there is not separation between subject and object; and, properly speaking, these two do not yet exist. This kind of thinking has no limitation; it is universal activity; its content is the universal itself; it is pure circulation, or pulsation within itself. It will, however, arrive also at:

2. Absolute diremption. How does this act of distinction take place? Thinking, in *actu*, is unlimited. The first distinction is, that the two sides which we have looked upon as the two modes of the principle are different according to their points of departure. The one side, subjective thinking, is the movement of thinking by which it rises from immediate, particular being, and elevates itself therein to the universal and infinite, as is the case in the first proofs of the existence of God. In so far as it has reached the universal, thinking is unlimited; its end is infinitely pure thinking, in which all the mists of finitude have disappeared. It then thinks God; all particularity has disappeared, and thus religion, the thinking of God, begins. The other side is the one which has the second point of departure, which starts from the universal, from the result of that first movement, from thinking, from the idea. The universal, on the other hand, is movement in itself, which consists in its power to distinguish itself in itself, and to contain this distinction in itself, but in such a way that it does not ob-

secure the universality. (See note on p. 136.) Universality here has a difference in itself, and proceeds in its entirety. This is the abstract content of thinking, and this abstract thinking is the result which has been arrived at.

Both sides oppose each other thus: Subjective thinking, the thinking of finite spirit, is a process as well, it is mediation in itself; but this process lies outside of it, behind it, and religion begins only when this thinking has arisen. It is thus in religion pure, motionless, abstract thinking. Concrete thinking, however, coincides with its object, for it is the thinking which begins with the universal, which distinguishes itself and goes on in union with this distinction; the concrete is the object for thinking as thinking. This thinking is, therefore, abstract thinking, and, in consequence, it is the finite; for the abstract is finite, but the concrete is the truth and the infinite object.

3. God is the spirit; in abstract determination he is determined as the universal spirit which particularizes itself; this is the absolute truth, and that religion is the true one which has this content.

The spirit is this process, it is movement and life; in other words, it can distinguish and determine itself, and the first determination is, that spirit exists as this universal idea itself. This universal contains the whole idea, but it only contains it [implicit]; it is idea only in itself.

In the judgment, there is the alien, which stands over against the universal, the particular; there is God, as that which is distinguished from himself, but he is so in such a way that this distinct thing is his whole idea in and for itself. Thus these two determinations are the same for each other; they are identity, they are one, and this distinction is not cancelled merely in itself, not merely for our knowing, but rather in such a manner that their identity is posited, and that these distinctions cancel themselves. It is implied in this distinction that the difference is posited as nugatory, and thus each [distinct phase] is in the other as in itself. In this process lies the nature of spirit itself, or, expressed in the form of feeling, it is eternal love. The holy spirit is eternal love. If we say: God is love, it is a very sublime and true saying, but it would be meaningless to take it simply as a simple determination, without analyzing what love is.

Love is a distinction of two, who yet, for each other, are simply

not distinguished. The feeling and consciousness of this identity is love. Love is this being-outside-of-myself: I have my self-consciousness not in myself, but in another; yet it is another in which alone I am satisfied, and at peace with myself (and I exist solely because I have peace in myself; if I lack this peace I am the contradiction which disintegrates itself); this other or alien, while thus being outside of me, has its self-consciousness in myself alone, and the two are only this combined consciousness of this sundered being and of their identity. This perceiving, this feeling, this cognizing of unity, is love.

God is love, *i. e.*, he is this distinguishing, and [at the same time] the nugatoriness of this distinguishing, this playing with distinction without being in earnest with it, which is posited as being cancelled, *i. e.*, [he is] the eternal, simple idea.

This eternal idea has found expression in Christian religion in what has been called the holy Trinity—that is, God himself, the eternally triune God.

God exists here only for the thinking man, who quietly remains withdrawn within himself. The ancients called this enthusiasm. It is the purely theoretical contemplation, the highest repose of thinking, but it is at the same time the highest activity in grasping the pure idea of God and in becoming conscious of it. The mystery of the dogma of what God is, is here communicated to mankind; men believe in it, and are already blessed with the highest truth when they receive it in their image-conception only, or as a mental representation, even when they are not conscious of the necessity of this truth, and do not comprehend it. Truth is the disclosure of what spirit is in-and-for-itself; man is spirit himself, therefore truth exists for him, but truth as it comes to him at first does not have for him the form of freedom; it is something that is given to him, something which he has received, but which he can receive only because he is spirit. This truth, this idea, has been called the dogma of the Trinity—God is spirit, the activity of pure cognition, activity which is by itself. It was principally Aristotle who conceived God in the abstract determination of activity. The pure activity is a knowing (*Actus Purus*, in the time of the scholastics), but pure activity, in order to be posited as activity, must be posited in its phases (*Momenten*). In the process of knowing, an other, an alien which is known, is necessary, and when the knowing

cognizes it, the other becomes appropriated by it. In this process it is contained that God, who is eternally in-and-for-himself, begets himself eternally as his Son, and distinguishes himself from himself; it is the absolute [diremption as exhibited in the form of] judgment (*Urtheil*). What he thus distinguishes from himself does not have the form of otherness, of alien being, but the thing distinguished is immediately nothing but that from which it is distinguished. God is spirit; no dimness, nor tint, nor blending enters this pure light.<sup>1</sup> The relation of father and son has been taken from organic life, and is used as an image-concept only. This natural relation is only a simile, and therefore does not quite correspond to what it is intended to express. We say God begets eternally his son, God distinguishes himself from himself, and in these expressions God forms the starting point of our exposition. We say: He does this, and is in the posited other strictly by himself (the form of love), but we ought to know that God himself is this entire activity. God is the origin [the cause]; he does this, but he is in the same way the end, he is the totality; and, as totality, God is spirit. God as merely father is not yet the full truth. (The Jewish religion cognizes him thus, without the son); he is, on the contrary, beginning and end. He is his own presupposition, he makes himself such (this is only another form of the distinction), he is the eternal process. The statement that this is the truth, and the absolute truth, may, perhaps, appear to have the form of a

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<sup>1</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—Hegel takes his similitudes here and elsewhere, at times with preference, from Goethe's peculiar work on the "Theory of Colors." Goethe considered Newton's theory erroneous, and believed that colors were produced by the joint action of two elementary principles—light and darkness—that is to say, by an admixture of the two. A small degree of darkness mingling with light, for instance, produced yellow; darkness with little light, blue. "To produce color, light and obscurity, darkness and brightness, or, if we wish to use a more general expression, light and non-light are necessary. Nearest to the light we have the color called yellow; another, nearest to darkness, we call blue. . . . These two primary colors, each by itself, may produce new colors, by their condensation or obscuration. . . . Colors are to be looked upon as half lights, or half shadows, and thus when mixed together they lose their special qualities and produce a shade of gray." ("Goethe's Theory of Colors," Introduction.) "Colors are the effect which colorless, transparent, and opaque bodies have on the light." (*Id.*, iv, 688.) "The dimness of the medium is often the necessary condition (*i. e.*, for light to produce the phenomenon of color"). (*Id.*, iv, 6, 691.) "Every modified light may be looked upon as colored; indeed, we may call every light, in so far as it is seen, color. Colorless light, colorless surfaces, are, in a measure, abstractions." (*Id.*, iv, 690.)

postulate. But it is the task and whole content of philosophy to make it known as that which is true in and for itself. In philosophy it is shown that the whole content of nature and of spirit gravitates dialectically towards this centre as its absolute truth. It cannot be our object here to prove that the dogma, this still mystery, is the absolute truth, for this is done everywhere in philosophy. The following may be said in further explanation of these determinations:

A. When it is predicated of God what he is, the attributes are given first: this is God; he is thus determined by predicates; this is the manner in which the idea is grasped by the image-conception or mental representation, and by the understanding. Predicates are determinations, particularizations: goodness, omnipotence, etc.

These predicates are not, indeed, natural immediateness, but they have become current through reflection; and thereby the determined content has become as immovably fixed as the natural content is, as which God has been represented in natural religion. The natural objects, like sun, sea, etc., *are*; but the determinations of reflection are just as identical with themselves as natural immediateness.

The Orientals have the feeling that this is not the true way of expressing the nature of God, and say, therefore, that he is *πολύνυμος*, and that he cannot be exhausted by predicates; for names, in this sense, are the same as predicates.

The true defect of this manner of determining God by predicates lies in the circumstance which gives rise to this infinite number of predicates, namely, that these predicates are particular determinations only, and that there are *many* such particular determinations given to a subject which is indeterminable and without differences in itself. Since they are particular determinations, and, since these particulars are considered according to their determinateness, since they are *thought*, they contain a contrast and contradiction; and, in this view, the contradictions are not cancelled.

The same appears in the assertion that these predicates are to express the relation of God to the world; the world is another thing than God. As particulars they are not adequate to his nature; in this lies the other manner of regarding them, namely, as

relations of God to the world—as omnipresence, omniscience of God in the world. .

They do not contain the true relation of God to himself, but his relation to something else—the world; thus they are limited, and fall into contradiction. We have the consciousness that God is not represented living and real, when so many particulars are enumerated in succession. Their contradiction is not truly cancelled by the abstraction of their determinateness, when the understanding demands that they should be taken only in *sensu eminentiori*. The true cancellation of the contradiction is contained in the idea, which is God's self-determination to be what is distinct from himself, but the idea is also the eternal cancellation of this distinction.

The distinction, if left in this condition, would be contradiction: if the distinction remained fixed, finiteness would be the result; the two elements are independent of, and yet in relation to, each other. It is not the nature of the idea to let this difference remain, but also to cancel it; God posits himself in this distinction, and likewise cancels it.

In asserting predicates of God which are particulars, we endeavor first to cancel this contradiction. This is an external activity; it is *our* reflection, and the circumstance that it is external, that it falls within us, implies that the contradictions cannot be cancelled. The [absolute] idea itself is the cancellation of this contradiction; its own content and determination is to posit this distinction and to cancel it absolutely, and in this lies the life and animation of the idea itself.

B. In the metaphysical proofs of the existence of God we see that mode of procedure which, starting from the idea, arrives at being, and we see that the idea is not only ideal, but that it *is*; that it has reality. In this standpoint, which we now occupy, originates the interest to pass from idea to being.

The divine idea is the pure idea, the idea without any limitation; the absolute idea involves this: that the idea determines itself, that it posits itself as what is distinct from itself. This is a phase (*moment*) of the divine idea itself, and, since the thinking, reflecting spirit has this content present and before itself, there lies in it the need of this transition and movement.

The logical element of the transition is contained in those so-



called proofs : it is intended to proceed, by means of the idea, from the idea and through the idea itself, to objectivity and being in the element of thinking. This process, which appears as a subjective need, is itself content, is one phase (*moment*) of the divine idea itself.

When we say God created a world, it is nothing but a transition from the idea to objectivity, but the world is here determined as something essentially other than God. It is the negation of God, and is external to him; is without or outside of him, is godless. Since the world is determined as this other thing, we do not have before us the distinction as inhering in the idea itself, and remaining within the idea; *i. e.*, being, objectivity, shall be shown to lie in the idea as activity, consequence, and as the self-determining process of the idea.

It is demonstrated thereby that this content, in itself, is the same as the one which is a requirement in the form of the mentioned proof of the existence of God. God, in the absolute idea, or in the element of thinking, is this simply concrete universal; *i. e.*, he posits himself as an alien or other thing, but does it in such a way that this other is immediately and directly posited as God himself, that the distinction is ideal only, that it is cancelled immediately, and that it does not attain the form of externality; this is what is meant by saying that the distinction must be demonstrated by means of and in the idea.

It appears from logic that it is the nature of each determinate idea to cancel itself, to exist as its own contradiction, to become in this what is distinct from itself, and to posit itself as such distinction. Thus the idea itself is still marked with the one-sidedness and finitude of being something subjective, since the determinations of the idea, the differences are posited only as ideal, and not as actual differences. This is the idea which makes itself objective.

When we say God, we have expressed his abstraction only; or, if we say God the father, the universal, we have expressed him only according to finitude. His infinity lies in this, that he cancels this form of abstract universality of immediateness, and by this the difference is posited. But he is also the cancellation of this difference. In this alone he becomes true reality, truth, infinity.

This idea is the speculative idea; *i. e.*, the rational, since it is

thought, since it is the thinking of the rational. On the other hand, the non-speculative thinking, the thinking of the understanding, stops at the difference as a difference, and in the same way at the finite and the infinite. The quality of being absolute is ascribed to both [of the latter], and hence relation to each other, and thus unity [is predicated], and with it contradiction.

C. This speculative idea stands in contrast with the sensuous, and also with the understanding; it is, therefore, a secret for both—for sensuous contemplation and for the understanding. It is a *μυστήριον* for each; *i. e.*, in regard to the rational element in it. The nature of God is not a secret in the ordinary sense, and least so in the Christian religion, for there God has made himself known, has shown what he is, there he is revealed; but it is a secret for sensuous perception, for the image-conception, for the sensuous mode of contemplation, and for the understanding.

The sensuous has, on the whole, externality for its primal principle; it is being-outside-of-itself; differences are beside each other in space, after each other in time; time and space are the externality in which differences exist. The sensuous view and mode of contemplation is accustomed to have before itself such difference as is outside itself. The basis and presupposition of this view is, that the differences for themselves thus remain separated from each other.

That which is [contained] in the idea remains, therefore, a secret to this mode of contemplation, because the idea has quite another mode, relation and category, than sensuousness. The idea is this distinguishing which is at the same time no distinction, and which does not remain in this distinction. God views himself in that which is distinguished from him; in his other he is allied to himself only, is only in himself therein, is linked but to himself; in his other he sees himself.

This is quite contrary to the sensuous [view]. In the sensuous, one thing is here and another is there; each is looked upon as something independent; it is looked upon as not having such a nature as to have existence by having itself in another. In the sensuous, two things cannot be in one and the same place; they exclude each other.

In the idea these differences are not posited as excluding each other, but as existing in this connection or joining together only

of the one with the other. This is the true supersensuous and not the ordinary supersensuous, which is said to be *above*; for the latter is also sensuous; *i. e.*, it is disjoined, external, and contingent. Only because God is determined as spirit, externality is cancelled; and this is, therefore, a mystery for the senses.

In the same way this idea stands above the understanding, and is a secret for it. For it is the nature of understanding to remain in the categories of thinking, to cling to them and to look upon them as being simply outside of each other, separated from each other, as being opposed to each other, and as being fixed. The positive is not what the negative is; [nor is] effect, cause.

But it is just as true for the idea that these differences cancel each other. Because they are distinct things they remain finite, and it is in the nature of the understanding to remain in the finite; and even when looking at the infinite, understanding sees on one side the infinite and on the other the finite.

The true standpoint is, that the finite and the infinite which stands opposed to the finite, have no truth, are but transitions in themselves. This is, therefore, a secret for the power of sensuous representation and the understanding, and they rebel against the rationality of the idea. The opponents of the dogma of the Trinity are found among those only in whom the sensuous element or the understanding predominates.

Nor can the understanding grasp anything else—that is to say, the truth of anything else. Even animal life exists as idea, as the unity of idea, of soul and body. For the understanding each appears separated, but it is at the same time true that the difference is in a process of cancellation; living is nought but this perpetual process.

What is living *is*, it has impulses, wants, and with this distinction and difference in itself, they rise in it. Thus it bears a contradiction in it, and the understanding looks upon the differences with the idea that the contradiction cannot be cancelled, and that, when these differences are brought in relation to each other, there subsists nothing but the contradiction which cannot be cancelled.

This is correct enough; the contradiction cannot cease when these are insisted upon as perennial distinctions, but the reason of it is, that understanding stops at these differences. Whatever

is living has needs, and therefore is contradiction; but the gratification of these wants is the annulment of the contradiction.

In my desires, impulses, needs, I am self-distinguished within myself. But life means the annulment of the contradiction, or the gratification of the desire; it seeks to set it at rest, but in such a way that this contradiction may rise again. It is the alternate succession of distinction, contradiction, and the annulment of it.

These phases differ in regard to time; there is sequence; one occurs after the other, and therefore they are finite. But the understanding, in considering desire and gratification, does not even comprehend that in the affirmative [element], in self-consciousness, the negation of self-consciousness, the barrier, the want, exist at the same time, but that I, as self-consciousness, at once stretch forth my hand beyond this want.

This is the definite idea of the *μυστήριον*. Mystery is the name which we also use for the inconceivable or incomprehensible; that which is called incomprehensible is the idea itself, the speculative, the thinking of the rational; but it is by thinking that the distinction [or inward diversity of contents] stands out clearly and distinctly.

If we think an instinct or desire, it is but an analysis of what the instinct or desire is. Affirmation and, in it, negation, self-consciousness, gratification, and desire. To think it means to cognize the distinct element that lies in it. When the understanding approaches this, it says: This is a contradiction, and on this it insists; it adheres to it, quite contrary to the experience that life means nothing but the annulment of these distinctions.

When the instinct or desire is analyzed, the contradiction appears, and one might say: The desire is something incomprehensible. The nature of God is just as much incomprehensible. What is called incomprehensible is nothing but the idea itself, which contains this attribute in it: namely, that it distinguishes, and the understanding stops at this distinction.

Understanding says: This cannot be comprehended; for the principle of the understanding is the abstract identity with itself and not the concrete identity, where these differences are in one. God is the One, the being of beings for the understanding. This identity, which is empty and lacks distinction, is a delusive fabric of the understanding and of modern theology. God is spirit, that

which makes itself objective to itself and knows itself therein ; this is concrete identity ; and thus the idea is at the same time an essential phase (*moment*). But, according to the abstract idea, the one as well as the other are independent for themselves, and at the same time they are correlatives, and thus the contradiction is there.

And this they call the incomprehensible. The idea is the annulment of the contradiction ; understanding can never achieve the annulment of the contradiction, because it starts from its own presupposition, namely, that they are and remain simply independent of each other.

The saying that the divine idea is incomprehensible may be attributed in part to the fact that, since religion is the truth for all men, the content of the idea appears in sensuous form, or in the form of the understanding. It appears in sensuous form, and thus we have the expressions father and son, expressing a relation existing in the life of man, a designation taken from sensuous life.

Truth is revealed according to its content in religion, but this content exists also in the form of the idea of thinking, of the idea in speculative form. No matter how happy those forms are which faith possesses, as "son," "begotten son," etc., they are perverted at once when the understanding begins to meddle with them and to carry over into them its categories ; it can show contradictions therein to its full satisfaction whenever it pleases. Understanding has the power and the right to do this by its distinction of these forms from their reflection in itself. But it is God, the spirit, who himself cancels these contradictions. Spirit has not waited for the understanding to remove the determinations which contain the contradiction. It is the nature of spirit to remove them. But it is its nature at the same time to posit those determinations, to distinguish itself in itself, to produce this diremption.

There is another form which the action of the understanding takes. We say : "God in his eternal universality has for his nature that he distinguishes himself, determines himself, that he posits what is alien or other to himself, and then also that he cancels the difference so that, in it, he is in himself ; by this self-creation alone spirit *is*." But here understanding steps up and carries with it its categories of finitude, counts one, two, three, and thus mixes the unfortunate form of number with it. But number has nothing

to do with this; counting is here totally empty of thought and meaning, and thus, if this form is therefore carried over into the question, there is emptiness and absence of idea in it.

Reason can use all the categories of understanding, but it also annuls them; this is what it does in this instance; but this is a hardship for the understanding, for, because its categories are used, it believes itself to have gained a right in them; but they are mis-used when used as they are in the understanding, in saying: three are one. It is therefore very easy to point out contradictions in such ideas, distinctions which are antithetic in form, and the bare and empty understanding thinks that it is doing something great when it collects them. All that is concrete, all that is living, bears, as we have shown, this contradiction in itself; dead understanding alone is identical with itself. But, in the idea, the contradiction is annulled also, and only in this annulment the spiritual unity exists.

At a first glance it looks as if it were a matter of course, something natural and artless to count the phases or stages (*momente*) of the idea as three and one. And yet if, according to the nature of number which has thus been mixed up with it, every determination is fixed as one, and then three ones must be comprehended as only one one, it becomes, as it seems, the hardest, or, as it may be expressed, the most unreasonable demand. For the understanding conceived only of the absolute independence or self-dependence of the one and absolute separation and disintegration. Logical contemplation, on the contrary, shows the One to be dialectic in itself and not truly independent. It is only necessary to think of matter, which is the real one that offers resistance, but is heavy; *i. e.*, it shows the tendency not to be as one, but to cancel its self-dependent existence, its being for itself, and thus itself pronounces the latter something nugatory; of course, since it remains only matter, this most extreme externality, this remains only a tendency; matter is still the poorest, most external, and unspiritual mode of being; but gravitation, this cancellation of the one, constitutes the principle of matter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—The characteristic of matter is gravitation. Gravitation is the striving of matter toward the centre of gravity. The centre of gravity is a geometrical point. A point is immaterial. Thus matter has for its characteristic the tendency towards and dependency on the immaterial.

The one is, in the first place, quite abstract; these "ones" are still more deeply expressed in a spiritual way by being defined as persons. It is the nature of personality that it is based on freedom, on primal, deepest, innermost freedom; but it is at the same time the most abstract mode in which the freedom manifests itself in the subject when the latter knows. I am a person, I am for myself; that is simply a fixed and rigid principle.

The determination of these differences as each being one, or even as each being a person, this infinite form in which each phase (*moment*) is to be as a subject, seems to be an insurmountable obstacle to our complying with what the idea demands, namely, that these distinctions be considered as not distinguished, but as simply One, as the cancellation of this difference.

Two cannot be one; each person is something rigid, inflexible, independent; each is existence for itself. Logic shows the category of One that it is a poor category, that it is One quite abstract. As regards personality, the contradiction seems to be carried so far in it that it becomes incapable of any solution; but the solution lies, nevertheless, in this, that this threefold person is but One, and the fact that the personality is posited therewith as a vanishing phase (*moment*) only expresses that the antithesis must be taken, not as a contrast of lower order, but in the absolute sense; and just in this extreme it cancels itself. The nature and character of this person, or rather subject, is so constituted as to cancel its isolation and separation.

It is the nature of morality and love to give up one's particularity, one's particular personality, and to expand it into universality. The same is true in the family, in friendship, where this identity of one with the other exists. In doing what is right towards the other, I consider him identical with myself. In friendship and in love I give up my abstract personality and thereby gain it, namely, the concrete personality.

The truth of this personality is indeed this, that we gain it by merging it into the other. Such forms of the understanding prove themselves immediately in experience such as cancel themselves. The person retains his identity in love and in friendship; by love it has its subjectivity, which is its personality. If the personality is abstractly retained in religion, in this instance, the result is three Gods, and in this the infinite form, the absolute negativity,

is forgotten. If the personality is not severed or dissolved, the result is the Evil or the Bad, for the personality which does not surrender itself to, and disappear in, the divine idea, is the evil or bad principle. In the divine unity personality is posited as dissolved, and the negativity of the personality is only in the phenomenon distinguished from that by which it is cancelled.

The Trinity has been reduced to the relation of Father, Son, and Spirit; this is a childlike relation, a childlike, natural form. The understanding has no such category, no relation which can be compared with this in regard to fitness and adequacy, but it must be remembered that it is only an image, a simile; spirit does not clearly enter into this relation. Love would be a still better expression, but Spirit is the true one.

The abstract God, the father, is the universal, the eternal, comprehensive, total particularity. We stand on the basis of spirit; the universal here comprehends everything in itself; the other, the son, is the infinite particularity, the phenomenon; the third is the individuality or singularity as such; but the universal, as totality, is itself spirit, all Three are the Spirit. In the third, we say God is spirit, but the latter has also a presupposition; the third is also the first. This must be remembered as essential. For, when we say: God in himself, according to the idea, is the immediate, self-dirempting power which returns into itself, he is this only in so far as he is Negativity immediately related to itself—*i. e.*, absolute reflection in itself, which is in itself the determination of spirit. In wishing, therefore, to speak of God in his first determination according to his idea, and then to pass over to the other determinations, we find that we have already spoken of the third; the last is the first. If, in order to avoid this, or on account of the imperfection of the idea, we begin abstractly and speak of the first only according to its determination, we call it the universal; then that activity of creation, or of producing, is in itself a principle differing from the abstract-universal, and may appear, and appears, as a second principle, as manifestation or phenomenon (*Logos*, *Sophia*), and the first as the "Abyss." This is explained by the nature of the idea; it appears in every aim, in every animated principle. Life sustains itself. To sustain means to proceed to differentiation, to a struggle with particularity, to find one's self distinguished from inorganic nature. Life is a result only when it has created itself; it is a product



which, in the second place, continues producing, the product is life itself; *i. e.*, it is its own presupposition, it passes through its process, and nothing new arises; what is produced has existed from the beginning. It is the same with love and reciprocating love. Only because love exists, the beginning, and all further activity is the confirmation by which it is at the same time produced and sustained; but the product had existence already; it is a confirmation, and there is no result which was not there at the beginning. In the same way the spirit presupposes itself. It is the beginning.

The difference through which the divine life passes is not an external one, but must be determined as an internal one, in such a way that the first, the father, must be conceived in the same way as the last. Thus, the process is nothing but a play of self-sustenance, the assurance of self-existence.

This determination is important because it forms the criterion by which many conceptions of God may be judged, and their deficiencies judged and recognized; the latter are frequently caused by the fact that this determination is overlooked or misunderstood.

We consider the idea as it is determined in pure thinking, and by pure thinking. This idea constitutes all truth, and is the one truth, and every particular that is to be comprehended as truth must be comprehended in the form of this idea.

Nature and the finite spirit are the product of God, and there is, therefore, rationality in them; that a thing is made by God implies that it contains truth, divine truth in general—*i. e.*, the determination of this idea in general.

The form of this idea is found in God as spirit only; if the divine idea is given in forms of finitude, it is not posited as it is in and for itself (only in spirit is it so posited), but exists there in a finite manner; the world, however, is something created by God, and, therefore, the divine idea always constitutes the basis of what it is. To cognize something means to cognize and determine it according to the form of this idea in general.

In former religions we have traces of this trinity as the true determination, especially in the Indian religion. Consciousness there became aware of this threefold existence; it conceived that the One could not remain One; that it is not as it truly should be, that the One is not the truth, but must be comprehended as this

movement, as this differentiation, in general, and as relation. The *Trimurti* is the rudest form of this determination.

But in this the third element is not the spirit, and true conciliation, but birth and departure — coming, going, and changing — which latter category is the union of differences, but a very subordinate union.

The idea is perfect, not as an immediate phenomenon, but becomes so when the spirit has finally come to dwell in its church; when spirit—the immediate, believing spirit—has risen to thinking. It is of interest to consider the fermentations of this idea, and to learn to recognize its principle in the wonderful phenomena which present themselves. The defining of God as the Triune has, at last, been quite discontinued in philosophy, and theology is no more in earnest with it. In both it has been attempted to belittle the Christian religion by saying that this determination is older than the Christian religion, and was taken from this or that source. Such historical matter, in the first place, has no force at all in regard to inner truth. In the second place, it is quite clear that those older nations and individuals did not know, themselves, what they possessed in this idea; they did not cognize that it contained the absolute consciousness of truth; hence they possessed it only [as one] among other predicates or determinations, as something other than it is. It is a very material point whether such a determination is the first absolute determination which forms the basis of all the rest, or whether it is one form which occurs among many, as, for instance, Brahma, who is One, but is not even the object of a form of worship. In the religion of beauty and external utility, this form, indeed, could appear last of all; the limiting, self-returning [symmetrical] means cannot be found in this, in this multitude and particularization. Still this religion is not without traces of such unity. Aristotle, in speaking of the Pythagorean numbers, the triad, says: "We do not believe ourselves to have invoked the gods, if we have not called them thrice." The abstract basis of this idea is found in the Pythagoreans and in Plato, but the determinations have remained quite in this abstraction, partly in the abstraction of one, two, three. In Plato it is found in a little more concrete form: the nature of the one and of the other, that which is different in itself, *ἑαυτερον*, and the third, which is the union of the two.

It is found here not in the same form as with the Indians, but as pure abstraction. These are determinations or categories of thinking, better than numbers, better than the category of number, but still they are, as yet, quite abstract categories of thinking.

Especially at the time of Christ, and for several centuries later, a philosophical conception is seen to arise which is based on the conception of the relation of the Trinity. It is found either in philosophical systems like that of Philo, who had familiarized himself by study with the Pythagorean and Platonian philosophy, and, later, in the Alexandrians, or it is found in the intermingling of the Christian religion with such philosophical conceptions; this intermingling tendency constitutes the greater part of the heretical doctrines, more especially of the Gnostic. On the whole, in these attempts at grasping the idea of the triune we see that occidental reality, under the influence of oriental ideality, is converted into a world of thought. These are, of course, nothing but first attempts, which do not proceed beyond obscure and fantastic image-concepts. We see in it, however, the struggling of the spirit after freedom, and this demands recognition.

A countless multitude of forms may be pointed out in this. The first is the Father, the *Ὁν*, which is designated as the Abyss, the Depth—*i. e.*, as the void, inconceivable, incomprehensible, as that which is beyond all conception.

It must be conceded that the void, the indefinite, is the inconceivable; it is the negative of the idea, and it is its determination to be this negative, since it is but a one-sided abstraction, and constitutes but a phase of the idea. The One for itself is not yet the idea, not yet the truth.

If the first is determined as being universal only, and then the determinations are given only as a kind of sequel to the universal, or the *Ὁν*, the latter becomes indeed an incomprehensible thing, for it is without content. What is conceivable is concrete, and is conceivable only when determined as a phase (*moment*). Here, then, is the deficiency, that the first itself is not grasped as a totality.

Another representation is that the first is the *βυθός*, the abyss, the depth, that it is the *αἰών*, the Eternal One, whose abode is in unspeakable height, who is exalted above all contact with finite things, out of whom nothing has been developed, who is the prin-

ciple and Father of all existence, *propator* ; who is Father only in mediation, *προάρχη*, before the beginning. This representation determines this revealing of this abyss, of this hidden God, as self-contemplation, as reflection in itself and concrete determination in general ; self-contemplation is creative, it is the creation of the only Begotten Son ; the eternal becomes comprehensible therein, since this depends on determination and realization.

The second (which is the being other or alien, the determination or the activity of determining in general) is defined in the most universal determination as *λόγος*, which means the rationally determining activity, or, as it may be called, the word. The word is the simple activity of giving utterance to itself, which does not make any fixed distinction, and does not become a fixed distinction itself, but rather has been heard immediately ; yet the word, immediate as it is, is received by the internal, and thus returns to its origin ; it [the second] appears also as *σοφία*, or wisdom, as the original, entirely pure man, as something existing and other than the first universal something which is separated and determined. God is Creator—that is, in the determination of the *λόγος*, as the self-uttering, self-speaking word, as the *ὄρασις*, the seeing of God.

By this it has been determined as the archetype of man, as Adam Cadmon, as the only Begotten One ; there is nothing accidental in this, no contingency, but it is eternal activity, and not merely at one time ; in God there is but one birth ; activity is as eternal activity ; it is a determination that belongs essentially to the universal itself.

In this there is true distinction which concerns the quality of both ; and yet this latter is one and the same substance, and the difference is, therefore, only superficial, even when determined as person.

The essential point is that this *σοφία*, the only Begotten One, remains in the bosom of God, and that, therefore, the difference is no real one.

Such are the forms in which the idea has fermented ; the principle from which they must be judged is that we must bear in mind that these phenomena, crude as they are, are rational ; we must remember this in order to see how they have their ground in reason, and what reason there is in it. But we should also know

how to distinguish the form of rationality which, while it is there, is not yet adequate to the content.

The idea has frequently been placed above and beyond man, beyond and above thought and reason, and has been so contrasted with the latter that this determination, which is all truth, and which alone is the truth, has been considered as something which is peculiar to God alone, as something that remains beyond [man], and does not reflect itself in the other which appears as world, nature, or man. From this it appears that the fundamental idea was not considered as the universal idea.

To Jacob Boehme this secret of the Trinity unfolded itself in another manner. His mode of thinking, imagining, and conceiving is rather fantastic and wild; he never elevated himself to the pure forms of thinking, but his tendency to see the Trinity in everything, everywhere, was the ruling principle in the ferment and struggle of his life [he says], for instance: It must be born in the heart of man. This [mode of thinking] is the universal basis of whatever is considered according to truth; it is in this form a finite thing, it is true, but, in its finitude, as [representing] the truth which is in it. Thus Jacob Boehme tried to represent in this determination the nature, heart, and spirit of man.

In more recent times the thought of a threefold principle (*die Dreiheit*) has been brought forward again by the Kantian philosophy in an external way, as a type, as a schema, so to say, and has been used in very definite forms of thought. It is a further advance to know this [Trinity] to be the essential and one nature of God, to know that it must, therefore, not be taken as something alien, something far removed, and that the idea must not be taken as being something beyond [the grasp of our thought]. It is, on the contrary, the aim of cognition to cognize the idea in the particular as well, and, if it is cognized, whatever is true in the particular will be found to contain this determination.

To cognize is to know a thing in its determinateness; its nature, however, is the nature of the determinateness itself, and the latter has found its exposition in the idea. It is the logical exposition and necessity that this idea is the True in general, and that all categories are the movements of determination.